



Needs, Barriers and Strategies for Inclusive Mobility

A TRAIL Research Report



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1 Introduction

Erasmus+ is the European Union's flagship program supporting education, training, youth, and sport across Europe. Key Action 1 (KA1) specifically focuses on mobility initiatives, funding opportunities for individuals to study, train, gain work experience, or volunteer abroad. These initiatives aim to improve participants' key competences, skills, and employability while fostering personal and professional growth through cross-cultural exchanges.

To make mobility accessible to all, Erasmus+ has extended its focus to include adult learners with fewer opportunities. This effort targets groups such as individuals with disabilities, those from economically or socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and those facing cultural or geographical barriers. Despite these advancements, challenges such as limited data on participation, inconsistent funding, and potential stigmatization remain significant obstacles. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of the motivations, barriers, and needs associated with inclusive mobility.

Defining the Target Group

"People with fewer opportunities," as defined by Erasmus+, are individuals facing obstacles that limit their effective participation in mobility programs. This broad category includes:

- Disabilities: Physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments.
- Educational challenges: Early school leavers, individuals with low qualifications, or those with learning difficulties.
- Economic barriers: Long-term unemployment, low income, or financial instability.
- Cultural and social challenges: Immigrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, or those facing discrimination.
- Health issues: Chronic conditions or psychiatric challenges.
- Geographical barriers: Residents of remote or underserved areas.
- Inclusive mobility focuses on tailored, needs-based approaches to create supportive environments, enabling these individuals to participate fully and equitably in mobility learning opportunities.

Objectives of the Report

The report seeks to answer a critical question: How can the participation of disadvantaged learners in KA1 mobility actions be increased? It aims to:

- Identify the state of inclusion of disadvantaged learners in KA1 mobility programs.
- Analyze the motivations, barriers, and readiness of learners, organizations, and educators.
- Investigate innovative practices and training frameworks to support inclusive mobility.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance inclusive learning opportunities.



2 Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the report, a mixed-methods research approach was employed, combining desk research, quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews and focus groups. These complementary methods were designed to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the state of inclusion in KA1 mobility activities, as well as to identify barriers, motivations, and potential solutions for enhancing participation among disadvantaged adult learners.

A desk study was conducted to examine available statistics on KA1 mobility programs at both the EU and national levels. This analysis aimed to map the current landscape of inclusion for disadvantaged learners in mobility projects, identifying trends, gaps, and regional variations. The desk research also reviewed existing policies, practices, and frameworks that promote inclusivity in adult education, providing valuable context for subsequent data collection and analysis.

Quantitative data was collected through an online survey disseminated to stakeholders, including adult education organizations, KA1 providers, and NGOs. This survey, distributed via platforms like EPALE and through direct stakeholder outreach, received 106 responses from 16 EU countries. It explored key themes such as the motivations and readiness of organizations to implement inclusive mobility projects, as well as the barriers they encounter. The survey also captured perspectives on existing practices and the potential for innovative approaches to enhance participation.

To deepen insights from the survey, qualitative data was gathered through a series of expert interviews and focus groups. Over 24 interviews were conducted with professionals in adult education, including educators, supervisors, and organizational staff involved in KA1 mobility programs. These discussions provided rich, detailed perspectives on the practical challenges and opportunities associated with implementing inclusive mobility projects. Focus groups further explored these themes, enabling participants to share experiences and collaboratively identify strategies for fostering greater inclusivity.

Quantitative findings from the survey were enriched by qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups, while the desk research provided a foundational understanding of the broader context. Together, these methods created a robust evidence base, informing actionable recommendations for enhancing the participation of disadvantaged learners in KA1 mobility programs.

3 Results

3.1 Statistic of Inclusive Mobility of the Adult Education

While exact figures may vary depending on the reporting period and data source, there are general trends and data provided by the European Commission and various national agencies involved in the Erasmus+ program.

1. Erasmus+ annual reports: The European Commission publishes annual reports that provide data on participation in Erasmus+ activities, including the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. These reports usually highlight the number of participants with fewer opportunities and special needs who benefit from the program.
2. Increased funding for inclusion: The Erasmus+ program has specific budget allocations and additional grants for participants with fewer opportunities to cover costs related to their mobility (e.g. support for travel, living expenses or personal assistance). This funding is intended to support their participation in KA1 mobility activities.
3. Statistics from the Erasmus+ Program Guide: According to the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ Program Guide, it is estimated that around 25% of participants in KA1 mobility projects are people with fewer opportunities. This percentage may vary between countries and sectors (e.g. higher education, vocational education and training, school education, adult education and youth).
4. National Agency data: The National Agencies responsible for the implementation of Erasmus+ in each country also collect and publish data on KA1 mobilities. Some National Agencies provide more detailed statistics on the inclusion of disadvantaged people in their specific context.

3.1.1 The 2022 Erasmus+ Annual report

Key figures in 2022

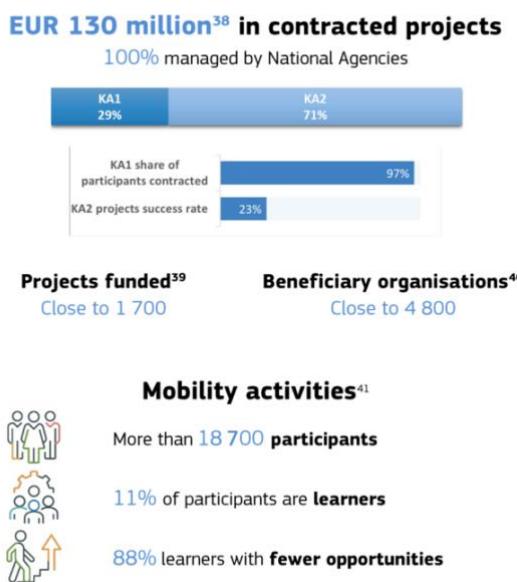


Figure 1. Source: 2022 Erasmus Plus Annual Report

With the resuming international travel after COVID, the 2022 Erasmus Plus Annual Report presented a high participation rate of learners of few opportunities in the adult education sector, reaching up to 88% of learners. It is, however, important to note that the actual number of participants was less than 2,000 learners. When looking at the E+ KA1 program as a whole, only 13% participants are from few opportunities background in 2022. Furthermore, among the five fields of E+ (School, Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and Youth), AE only represent 2% of the overall mobility participants. As reference, there are more than 200,700 participants under Youth Mobility (43,884 with few opportunities) and 224 000 in VET (23,340 with fewer opportunities). In comparison, the number of learners with fewer opportunities participated in AE mobility is less than 10% of the other fields.

Key figures



More than **1.2 million learners and staff** moved in 2022



13% participants with **fewer opportunities**²¹



77% learners (23% staff)



60% women (40% men, others less than 1%)

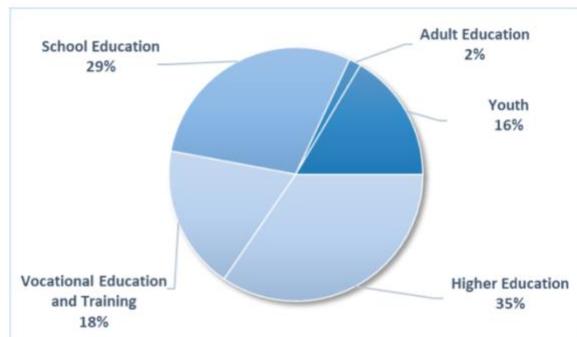


Figure 15 - Mobility in 2022 per field

Figure 2. Source: 2022 Erasmus Plus Annual Report

3.1.2 Partner Country Research

The TRAIL partnership also conducted desk research on available data from the respective national agencies. This analysis aimed to map the current landscape of inclusion for disadvantaged learners in mobility projects, identifying trends, gaps, and regional variations. The desk research also reviewed existing policies, practices, and frameworks that promote inclusivity in adult education, providing valuable context for subsequent data collection and analysis. We have found data made available and accessible at the national level varies greatly upon the field of education and country.

Using the 2022 data published by the European Commission, we have extracted information pertaining to five selected countries. The following findings summarize key insights derived from this dataset.

2022 KA1 Participant Profile in Adult Education

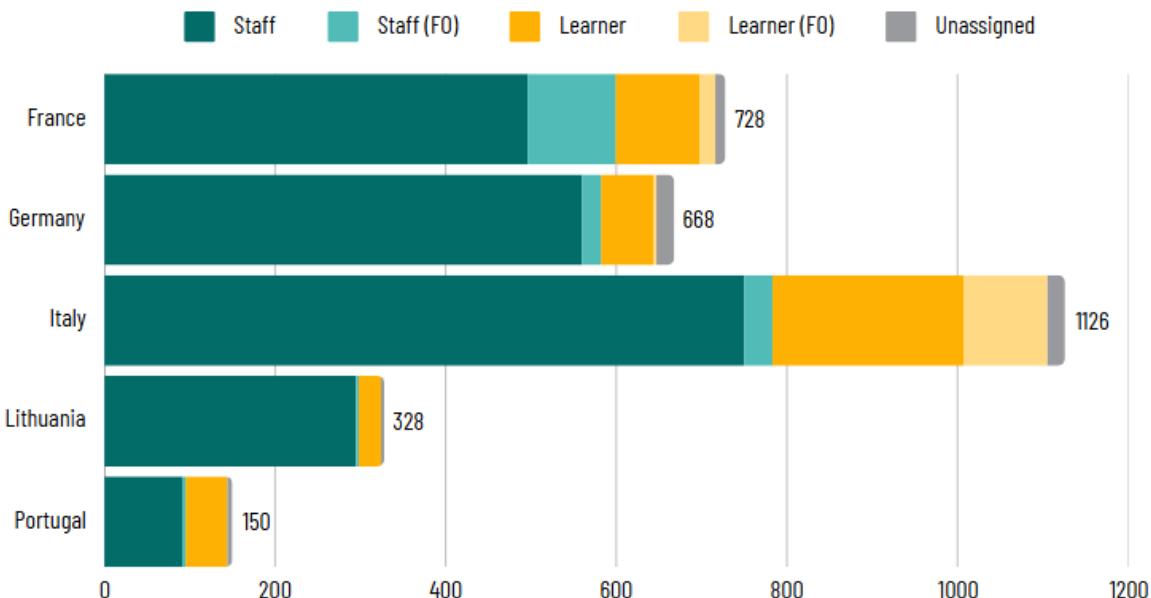


Figure 3. Adult Education KA1 Projects Participants Profile. FO= Fewer Opportunities. Source: Erasmus+ mobility data 2022

The graph shows the 2022 KA1 participant profile in adult education across five countries: France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, and Portugal. Italy had the highest total participation (1,126), with a significant proportion of learners, followed by France (728) and Germany (668), both having more staff than learners participate in KA1 offers. Lithuania and Portugal had fewer participants, with Lithuania at 328 and Portugal at 150. In every country represented, staff members make up the majority of participants. Even in countries with smaller overall participation (Lithuania and Portugal), staff numbers outpace learners. The segment for learners with fewer opportunities (FO) is extremely small across all countries. This highlights a significant underrepresentation of learners with fewer opportunities in adult education mobility programs. Across all countries, except Italy, learners with fewer opportunities represent less than 8% of total participants. For instance, in Germany, Portugal and Lithuania learners with fewer opportunities are barely visible, indicating their share is under 2% of the learner group. Italy has the largest total participant number and also shows learners with fewer opportunities as a bigger fraction in comparison with other countries, estimated at around 10-15% of total participants.

In conclusion, staff are the predominant participants in adult education mobility projects across all five countries. Learners are consistently a minority, and within this group, learners with disabilities are even more underrepresented. These trends suggest a need for targeted efforts to increase the participation of learners—especially those with disabilities—in adult education mobility opportunities.

Each of the partners' have conducted a desk research on available data from the respective national agencies on inclusion of adult learners with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+ offers.



Germany

Since 2022, Germany's Erasmus+ Key Action 1 adult education program has steadily recovered from pandemic setbacks, with 63 organizations accredited in adult education and around 3,300 mobility stays completed, mainly to Italy, Austria, and Spain. While mobility activities for staff of adult education dominates, expanding learner participation—especially for those with fewer opportunities—remains challenging due to the need for extra support. In 2023, stays abroad were approved for 4,653 people with fewer opportunities (4,497 learners, 156 education staff). This represents 14 percent of all approved stays abroad. In the adult education partnerships, inclusion was the most frequently chosen priority in 2022 and 2023. The National Agency at BIBB supports inclusion through funding tools, guides, accessible resources, and events fostering exchange and best practices, driving gradual growth and diversity in participation.

Portugal

In 2022, Erasmus+ Portugal funded 549 mobility projects with a total budget of 62 million euros, distributed across education sectors: vocational training (27%), youth (26%), school education (25%), higher education (19%), and adult education (3%). Adult education projects accounted for 9% of the budget, averaging grants of 35,000 euros each. Portuguese student mobility increased significantly by 51% compared to the previous year. Additionally, Portugal participated in 135 cooperation projects, with digital transformation as the main priority (77% of grants) and inclusion and diversity addressed in 27% of the funding.

Lithuania

In 2022-2023, Lithuania allocated Erasmus+ funding across education sectors as follows: vocational training and adult education received the largest share with about €2.49 million (28.36%), including €1.245 million (14.18%) specifically for adult education; school education was allocated approximately €2.33 million (26.54%), focusing on teacher training and new teaching methods; higher education projects received €1.5 million (17.08%) supporting cooperation and mobility; youth projects were funded with about €1.6 million (18.22%) for exchanges and social inclusion; and sports projects received €860,000 (9.79%) for social initiatives and international cooperation.

Italy

In 2022, Italy's Erasmus+ program strongly supported education and training mobility and cooperation, with a focus on inclusion for participants with fewer opportunities and special needs. In 2019, 118 KA1 projects out of 128 included disadvantaged learners, of these, 40% involved Special Needs and 52% Fewer Opportunities. This marks a 32% increase in total projects from 2014, with a 97% increase for Special Needs and a 455% increase for Fewer Opportunities. It shall be noted that in the last official monitoring report by the Italian National Agencies issued in 2023, the topic of FO and SN additional funds is not tackled anymore. Mobility projects were most numerous in school education, followed by vocational education and training (VET) and higher education, with higher education receiving the largest funding (€125 million), while adult education mobility had €3.3 million. Over 100,000 learners and nearly 30,000 staff participated in mobility exchanges, reflecting a recovery from COVID-19 impacts.



France

In 2022, Erasmus+ France managed a budget of 288 million euros, financing 136,135 mobilities across education sectors: higher education (52%), school education (25%), vocational education and training (21%), and adult education (2%). France remains the leading country in sending students abroad and has become the top sender in education and vocational training sectors as well. To promote inclusion, applicant schools requested an increased inclusion supplement—from €100 to €150 per month—for students facing economic, social, geographical, or health difficulties. The demand for mobilities rose by 30% compared to 2021, with growing participation in school education and a gradual diversification beyond higher education, reflecting France's strong commitment to broadening access and supporting disadvantaged learners through Erasmus+ initiatives.

3.1.3 Learnings from desk research

The desk research conducted by TRAIL partners reveals significant inconsistencies in the availability, depth, and accessibility of data related to adult learners with fewer opportunities across Erasmus+ National Agencies. While inclusion is a clearly stated priority in the Erasmus+ program, the extent to which this is reflected in reporting and implementation varies considerably between countries.

In Germany, for instance, the National Agency provides relatively comprehensive data and has introduced targeted support measures—such as funding tools, accessible resources, and exchange events—to increase participation among learners facing social or economic disadvantage. Inclusion was cited as the top priority in adult education projects for both 2022 and 2023. However, even here, learner participation remains limited compared to staff mobility.

Portugal shows strong overall engagement in Erasmus+ but allocates only a small portion of its funding and participation to adult education. While inclusion supplements are increasingly requested, concrete figures on the participation of adult learners with fewer opportunities remain scarce.

Lithuania presents a more balanced distribution of Erasmus+ funding across sectors, with vocational and adult education receiving notable support. Nevertheless, detailed reporting on disadvantaged adult learners is limited, making it difficult to assess impact at the learner level.

Italy has historically prioritized inclusion in its KA1 adult education projects, reporting significant growth in projects involving learners with special needs and fewer opportunities between 2014 and 2019. However, more recent national reporting no longer includes explicit reference to additional funding or support for these groups, creating a gap in transparency and trend monitoring.

France, which manages one of the largest Erasmus+ budgets in Europe, is increasingly focused on inclusion, especially through raising the inclusion supplement for disadvantaged participants. While adult education accounts for a small share of overall mobility, recent efforts indicate a growing commitment to reducing barriers for learners with fewer opportunities.



Key Insights:

- **Inconsistent and limited data availability:** Across all five countries, access to detailed information on adult learners with fewer opportunities is uneven. In many cases, data is either unavailable or not disaggregated by learner status, making it difficult to evaluate progress toward inclusion goals.
- **Low learner participation in mobility:** Staff continue to dominate adult education mobility figures. Learners—especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds—are significantly underrepresented, pointing to structural and operational challenges in engaging this target group.
- **Persistent implementation challenges:** Despite policy commitments, the realization of inclusive mobility is hindered by factors such as administrative complexity, limited organisational capacity, and fragmented support structures. These systemic issues constrain the ability of providers to fully involve disadvantaged learners in international learning experiences.

3.2 THE SURVEY

The TRAIL survey was designed to collect insights on how best to promote and facilitate the participation of disadvantaged adult learners in mobility programs. The survey aimed to identify the existing support mechanisms and to highlight any additional resources necessary to enhance engagement and accessibility in mobility opportunities across Europe. A total of 106 responses were gathered from participants across 16 European countries: Lithuania, Slovenia, Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Russia, Austria, Sweden, Belgium, Hungary, and Estonia.

Nearly half of the respondents (47.6%) were affiliated with Non-Governmental and Not-for-Profit organizations. Adult education providers comprised 22.3% of respondents, Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions made up 17.5% of the responses. Higher Education institutions accounted for 8.7% of the sample. The remaining respondents were associated with other organizations, including Registered Associations (e.V.), Public Administration entities active in labour policy, and organizations operating across multiple relevant fields. These diverse perspectives collectively underscore the wide-ranging efforts and collaborative potential in supporting disadvantaged adult learners and advancing their access to equitable learning and mobility opportunities across Europe.

3.2.1 Survey Results

Organization's experiences with mobility offers for learners with fewer opportunities

Q: Have you or your organization ever received/sent learners with fewer opportunities in a learning abroad program?

Respondents were asked whether they or their organizations had experience with either hosting or sending learners with fewer opportunities in international learning programs. The majority, nearly 80%, indicated that they or their organizations have been involved in mobility offers for learners with fewer opportunities. Conversely, 20.2% of respondents reported that they have not yet been involved in receiving or sending learners with fewer opportunities for learning abroad. With organisations that had experience with fewer opportunities learners, 8% of the respondent worked with learners with physical or sensory disabilities and 22.15% respondent worked with learners with economic barriers.

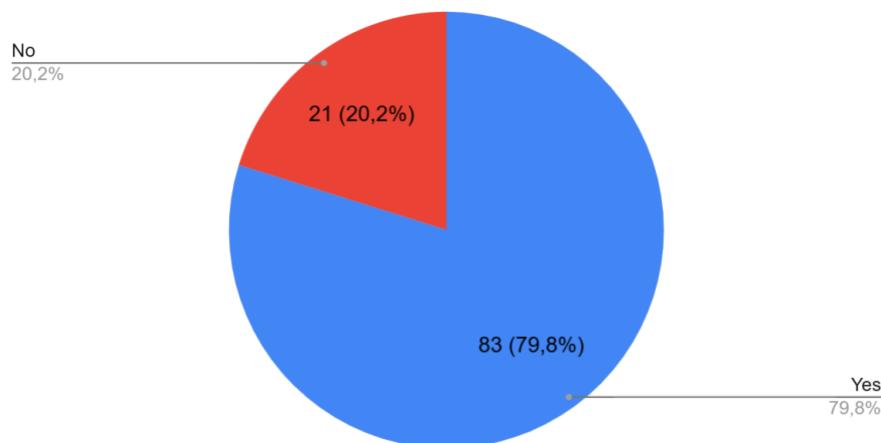


Figure 4. Have you or your organization ever received/sent learners with fewer opportunities in a learning abroad program?

Awareness of the Inclusion Support Grant under Erasmus+ program

Q: Are you aware of the Inclusion Support Grant under the Erasmus+ program, which provides additional funding to support people with fewer opportunities in participating in mobility learning activities?

The survey question on awareness of the Inclusion Support Grant under the Erasmus+ program revealed that 61,5% of respondents are familiar with this funding, while 38,5% are not.

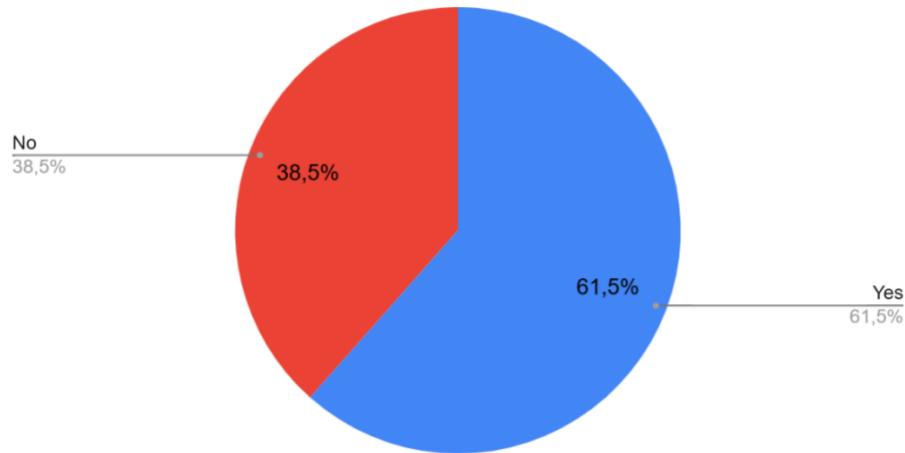


Figure 5. Are you aware of the Inclusion Support Grant under the Erasmus+ program, which provides additional funding to support people with fewer opportunities in participating in mobility learning activities?

Motivation of organizations to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility learning activities

Q: On a scale of 1 to 5, how motivated is your organization to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility learning activities?

Respondents were asked to rate the organization's level of motivation to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility learning activities from 1 to 5. The majority - 60 responders rated their level of motivation highest, with 5. 31 responders rated it with 4, 12 responders rated the motivation with 3, 2 with 2, and 1 with 1. The average score of motivation of organizations to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility learning activities was 4.4 out of 5.

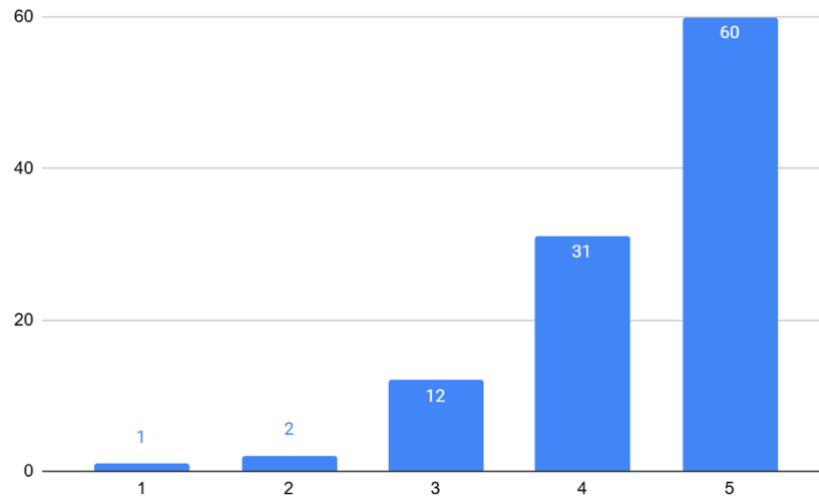


Figure 6. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 No Motivation and 5 Very much Motivated), how motivated is your organisation to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility learning activities?

Q: What are your organization's main motivations for engaging in mobility learning?

Respondents were asked what are the organization's main motivations for engaging in mobility learning. Promoting diversity and inclusion was most common with 30,5% of answers. 27,5% of responders marked strengthening international partnerships, 25% of responder's main motivation is improving educational outcomes, 16% of responder's main motivation is funding opportunities and the remaining respondents marked inclusion of the NEET's and shortage of skilled workers.

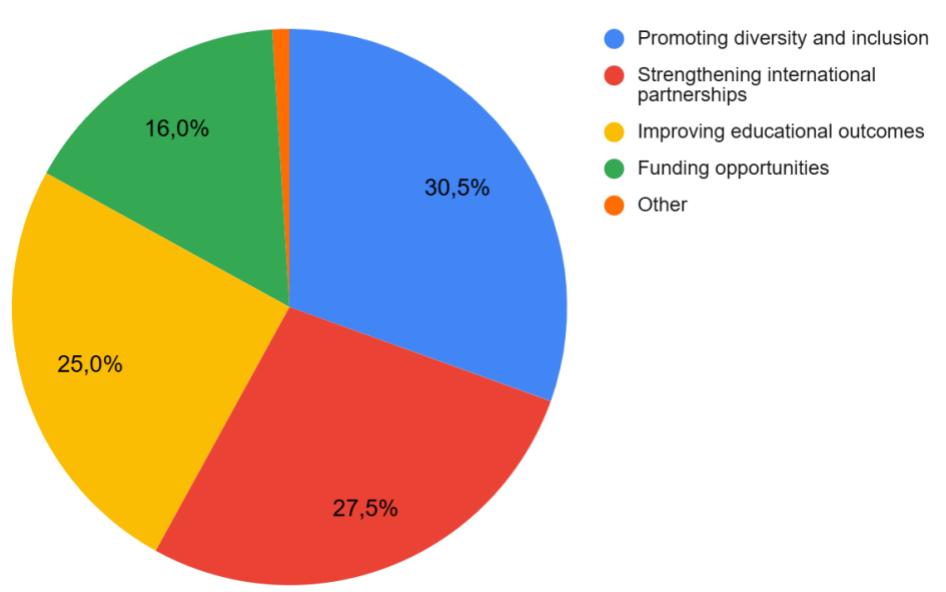


Figure 7. What are your organization's main motivations for engaging in mobility learning?

Organisation's readiness to support disadvantaged learners in mobility learning

Q: How would you rate your organisation's readiness to support disadvantaged learners in mobility learning?

Respondents were asked to rate the organization's readiness to support disadvantaged learners in mobility learning. The majority - 47 responders rated their level of readiness with 4. 32 responders marked it with 3, 17 responders marked the motivation with 5, 8 with 2, and 3 with 1. The average score of the organization's readiness to support disadvantaged learners in mobility learning was 3,6 out of 5.

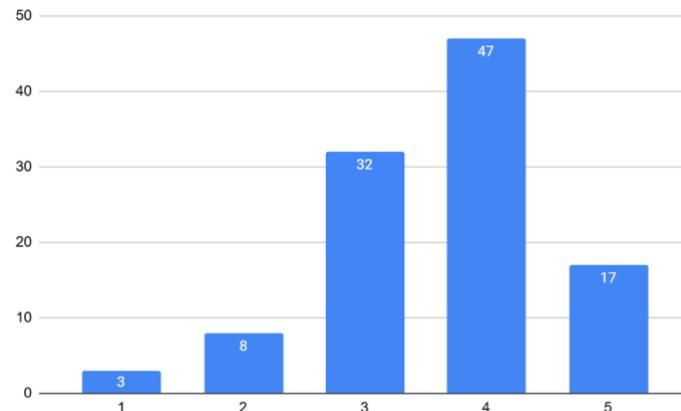


Figure 8. On the scale of 1 to 5 (1 Not Ready At All, and 5 Very Much Ready), how would you rate your organization's readiness to support disadvantaged learners in mobility learning?

Organization's barriers in involving disadvantaged learners in mobility learning

Q: What are the main barriers your organization faces in involving disadvantaged learners in mobility learning?

Respondents were asked to identify main barriers organization faces in involving disadvantaged learners in mobility learning. The primary barriers identified were a lack of staff and capacity (37 responses) and lack of support services (36 responses), followed by the administrative burden, noted by 28 respondents and funding limitations cited by 21 respondents. A less commonly noted was the lack of awareness of inclusion practices (7 responses).

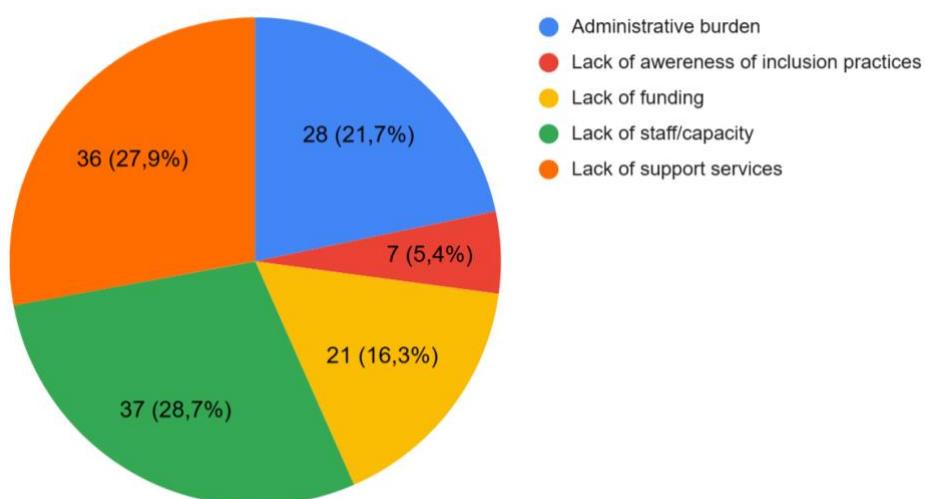


Figure 9. What are the main barriers your organization faces in involving disadvantaged learners in mobility learning?

Q: On the scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you think these barriers are adequately addressed by the current EU education and life-long learning policy?

The respondents were asked to rate on the scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do they think these barriers are adequately addressed by the current EU education and life-long learning policy. The majority of respondents (62) rated the adequacy of these barriers being addressed by the current EU education and life-long learning policy with 3. 28 respondents rated it with 4, 11 respondents rated it with 2, 4 respondents with 5 and 2 respondents with 1. The average score of barriers being adequately addressed by the current EU education and life-long learning policy was 3.2.

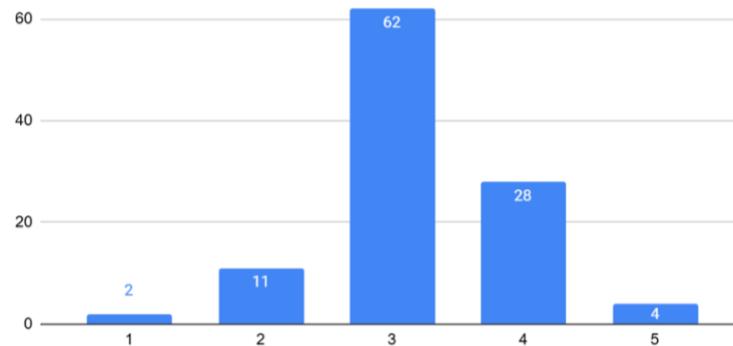


Figure 10. On the scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you think these barriers are adequately addressed by the current EU education and life-long learning policy?

Q: Does your organization currently have specific policies or strategies in place to support disadvantaged learners?

The survey question on organization's currently used policies or strategies in place to support disadvantaged learners revealed that 74,8% of respondents do have it, while 25,2% do not. From respondents who has policies in place, partnerships with local support organizations (22.8%) and language and cultural preparation (22.2%) were among the most frequently implemented policies. Tailored mentoring or coaching (20%) also received a significant response rate. Crisis intervention and mental health support services (10.8%) had a relatively lower implementation rate. Financial support (7.8%) and adequate accessibility and infrastructure (7.8%) were among the least common policies. The remaining respondents use accessible communication formats (e.g., braille, sign language interpretation) (6%) and working with (few) international partners capable to host disadvantaged learners (0,6%).

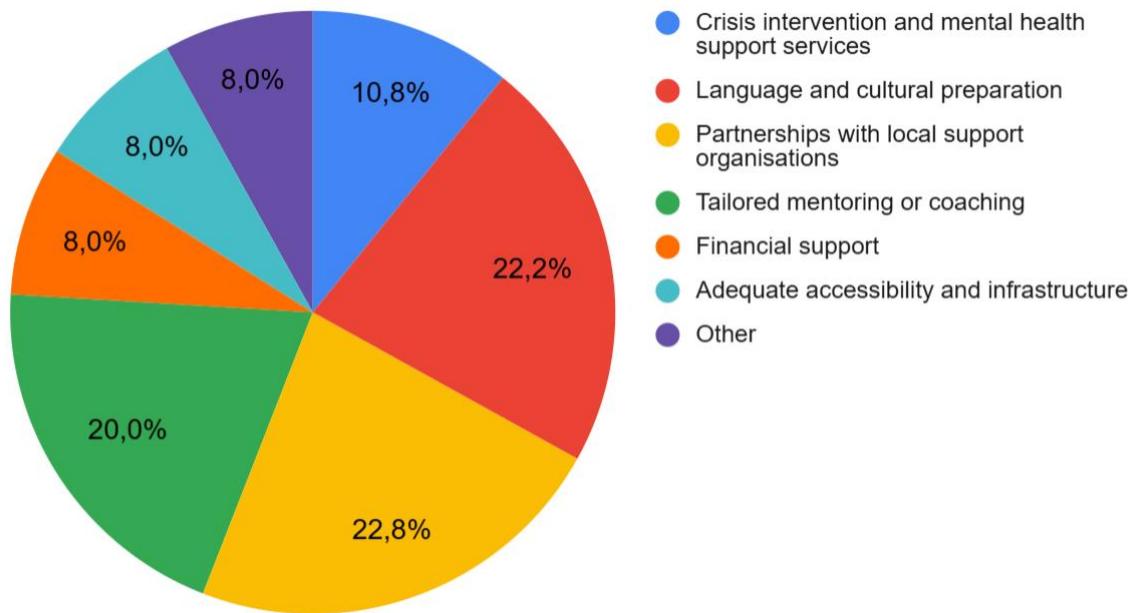


Figure 11. Types of policies in place to support disadvantaged learners.

Need for additional support or resources to better involve disadvantaged learners in mobility learning

Q: What additional support or resources would your organization need to better involve disadvantaged learners in mobility learning?

As this was an open question, we have sorted the responses in 6 categories:

Financial stability and funding needs. Stable funding: Respondents consistently indicated the need for stable financing, whether from government sources (4 mentions), local funding (7 mentions), or funding specifically for preparatory courses and meetings to support learner readiness. Funding for preparation and follow-up: Organizations highlighted the importance of funding to support both preparatory activities (e.g., creating learning agreements) and follow-up processes to reinforce the impact of mobility experiences. They noted that structural challenges, such as housing instability or personal hardships, can reduce the long-term impact of mobility learning. Additional grants and administrative flexibility: Extra grants are needed to cover administrative tasks, and organizations would benefit from flexible program designs to adapt to the specific needs of disadvantaged learners (e.g., shorter or virtual exchanges).

Capacity building and staff development. Staff and trainer capacity building (16 mentions): Many organizations indicated a need for increased capacity-building resources for staff and trainers. This includes time for accessible communication creation, mental health training, and education for leaders who support learners in mobility programs. Training manuals and guidelines: Additional training materials, such as manuals and guidelines, were requested to equip trainers with the skills and knowledge to effectively support disadvantaged learners.

Infrastructure and accessibility enhancements. Adapted infrastructure: 2 respondents expressed the need for infrastructure improvements, including accessible facilities and tools tailored to meet the physical and learning needs of disadvantaged learners. Accessible communication and learning materials: Organizations requested accessible communication



formats and learning materials designed to cater to various needs, such as different mobility durations or virtual participation options.

Awareness and advocacy within organizations. Raising awareness among management: Some respondents mentioned the need to raise awareness within their organizations, especially at the management level, about the unique benefits of mobility for disadvantaged learners. This could improve organizational commitment and cross-departmental collaboration in supporting inclusive mobility initiatives. Highlighting positive outcomes to funders: Respondents noted a need to communicate the positive impact of disadvantaged learners' participation in mobility programs to funders and donors, which could strengthen long-term funding and support.

Partnerships and networks. Strengthening local partnerships: Many organizations expressed interest in expanding partnerships with local NGOs, support organizations, and authorities to provide more holistic support for learners. Sharing best practices with international networks: Respondents mentioned that greater access to international networks and sharing good practices with partners would enhance their approach to including disadvantaged learners.

Tools and resources for learner-specific support. Flexible program options: Respondents indicated a need for resources and tools to adapt programs based on individual learner needs, including scheduling flexibility, infrastructure accessibility, and mental health accommodations. Tools for site selection and suitability: Organizations identified a lack of resources for evaluating and selecting appropriate host locations that can adequately support disadvantaged learners. Direct support with bureaucratic processes: Assistance with complex administrative tasks (e.g., insurance, documentation) was frequently mentioned, as these processes often present additional challenges for disadvantaged learners.

3.2.2 Survey conclusion

Motivation: The responses to this question reveal a strong motivation among organizations to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programs. With an average score of 4.4 out of 5, and 91 out of 106 respondents rating their motivation as either 4 or 5, there is clear commitment across sectors to promote inclusivity and equal access in learning abroad opportunities. This high motivation level reflects a strong alignment with European priorities to reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion in education. Such enthusiasm from organizations is a promising indicator that, given adequate resources and support, many are eager to take concrete steps to engage disadvantaged learners. This motivation is crucial for achieving the goals of Erasmus+ and similar programs, as it suggests that organizations are likely to actively seek out and utilize available support measures, such as the Inclusion Support Grant, if they are adequately informed.

Readiness: The readiness score of 3.6 out of 5 shows that while organizations are moderately prepared to support disadvantaged learners in mobility programs, there is room for improvement. A significant portion of respondents (47) rated their readiness as 4, indicating they feel fairly well-equipped, but not fully prepared, to support these learners. Only 17 respondents rated their readiness at the maximum level (5), suggesting that few organizations feel completely confident in their capacity to address the diverse needs of disadvantaged learners. This level of readiness implies that many organizations are on the right path but still require additional resources, guidance, or support to fully meet the needs of disadvantaged learners. Key areas for improvement could include enhanced staff training, expanded support services, and accessible infrastructure. The organizations that rated their



readiness lower (2 or 3) may particularly benefit from targeted interventions to raise their preparedness level.

Barriers: The survey responses indicate several significant obstacles that organizations face in supporting disadvantaged learners' participation in mobility programs. The primary barriers identified were a lack of staff and capacity (37 responses) and insufficient support services (36 responses), pointing to an overall need for enhanced resources and infrastructure within organizations to effectively manage and support mobility activities for this group. The administrative burden, noted by 28 respondents, further complicates this challenge. The processes required for planning, coordinating, and supporting mobility learning can be time-consuming and complex, often stretching the already limited capacity of organizations. This may deter some from fully engaging in programs that are more challenging to administer without streamlined procedures or additional assistance. Funding limitations were also cited by 21 respondents, underscoring the need for greater financial resources to adequately support the unique needs of disadvantaged learners. While the Inclusion Support Grant and other funding mechanisms exist, the response indicates that they may not be accessible or sufficient to cover all costs involved in such initiatives. A less commonly noted but still impactful barrier was the lack of awareness of inclusion practices (7 responses). This suggests that while many organizations may be motivated to support inclusion, they may lack the specific knowledge or tools needed to do so effectively. Additionally, unique responses highlighted needs for more targeted training for staff to better accompany learners and address the challenges of preparing disadvantaged individuals for travel and study abroad.

Awareness of Inclusion Support Grant: This indicates that, while a majority of stakeholders are aware of financial resources specifically intended to support disadvantaged learners, a significant portion remains uninformed. The 40% unfamiliarity rate suggests potential barriers to fully leveraging the Inclusion Support Grant. For Europe, this gap in awareness could hinder the program's effectiveness in reaching those who need it most. Without widespread knowledge of such funding opportunities, organizations may struggle to support learners with fewer opportunities in accessing mobility programs, limiting the inclusive potential of Erasmus+. Enhanced awareness can empower more organizations to support disadvantaged learners, leading to a more equitable educational landscape across Europe and better alignment with the Erasmus+ program's mission to foster inclusion and accessibility in mobility learning.

Needs: Organizations identified various needs, including stable financing, management awareness, accessible communication, and capacity-building for staff. Meeting these needs would enhance organizations' ability to involve disadvantaged learners, especially through long-term financial and structural support. There's a call for improved funding, awareness, and program flexibility. The responses reflect a clear demand for adaptable learning opportunities that consider the specific barriers disadvantaged learners face, suggesting that providing shorter or virtual exchanges could address these issues.

Implications for the TRAIL Project

For the TRAIL project, this finding highlights an opportunity to focus on building readiness across participating organizations. Strategies could include:

1. **Capacity-building workshops:** Offering training on best practices for inclusivity, tailored mentoring, and supporting specific needs could boost confidence and preparedness.
2. **Resource development:** Providing accessible tools, adaptable program templates, and guidelines on supporting disadvantaged learners would help organizations feel more equipped.



3. **Partnership development:** Encouraging organizations to collaborate with local NGOs and support organizations could create a broader support network, allowing them to address learners' needs more comprehensively.
4. **Feedback loops:** Implementing systems for feedback and continuous improvement could help organizations adjust their approaches to be more effective over time.

The TRAIL survey demonstrates that European organizations are ready and highly motivated to involve disadvantaged learners in mobility learning programs. However, this readiness is hindered by resource gaps, including funding, staff capacity, and support infrastructure. Although the Erasmus+ Inclusion Support Grant is available, limited awareness of this funding option suggests a need for improved outreach and communication about its benefits. To strengthen inclusive mobility efforts across Europe, it is essential to address these barriers through multi-level support that includes stable funding, targeted training for staff, streamlined administrative processes, and enhanced awareness of available grants and resources. By equipping organizations with the necessary tools, training, and financial backing, Europe can ensure that mobility learning becomes a genuinely accessible and transformative opportunity for all learners, regardless of their socio-economic background or disabilities they may have.

3.3 Interviews and Focus groups

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the findings from interviews and focus group conducted by TRAIL project partners across the five partner countries with 21 staff/professionals involved in mobility learning and 19 learners who participated in European mobility offers. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the motivations, experiences, and challenges associated with mobility programs for disadvantaged adult learners. By gathering insights from sending organisations, hosting institutions, and learners themselves, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how mobility programs impact participants, the barriers that hinder full inclusion, and the strategies that have proven effective in making mobility accessible to all. The report also identifies areas for improvement, highlighting the importance of financial support, training, and structural adjustments to ensure that mobility can truly serve as a tool for empowerment and lifelong learning.

3.3.1 Motivation

Across all partner countries, there was strong consensus that mobility programs hold immense value, both for the individuals who participate and for the organisations facilitating these opportunities. Many organisations, particularly in France, operate in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, where mobility serves as a means of fostering inclusion and strengthening community ties. Organisations see these initiatives not just as an opportunity for professional development but as part of a broader commitment to social justice and equity. For disadvantaged learners, mobility offers a unique chance to step outside familiar surroundings, gain confidence, and explore new personal and career aspirations.

A similar perspective emerged in Portugal, where organisations highlighted mobility's role in fostering inclusion, particularly for individuals with special needs. Mobility experiences allow these participants to engage in activities they might not otherwise have access to, helping to break stereotypes and redefine social expectations. However, many organisations in Portugal also acknowledged that, despite their willingness to support learners with disabilities, their capacity to do so remains constrained by financial and logistical challenges.

In Italy, hosting organisations demonstrated varied levels of commitment to inclusive mobility. Some institutions had long-standing experience in working with disadvantaged learners and were deeply invested in their inclusion, while others sought to make their mobility programs more inclusive but lacked the necessary expertise and resources. For learners, the primary motivation for participation stemmed from academic ambitions and the opportunity to improve language skills through international exchange.

A particularly strong case for mobility was found in Lithuania, where senior learners reported overwhelmingly positive experiences. Many participants described mobility as a well-structured and highly beneficial initiative, especially in terms of learning new technologies and engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. The presence of an accompanying person who spoke English played a crucial role in easing communication barriers, and many seniors expressed a strong interest in future mobility opportunities.

A different perspective emerged in Germany, where organisations that work with disadvantaged groups saw mobility as an extension of their social mission. For these institutions, mobility was not only about education but also about providing individuals with a sense of empowerment and autonomy. Beyond benefiting learners, international mobility



was viewed as a strategic opportunity for organisations to promote their work on a broader scale and build international collaborations.

Across all countries, it was evident that mobility was seen as more than just a learning experience. It was regarded as a gateway to new opportunities, a means of fostering independence, and a tool for building social connections. However, while the motivations were clear, the reality of making mobility accessible to all remained a complex challenge.

3.3.2 Impact on Disadvantaged Learners

The positive impact of mobility on disadvantaged learners was widely acknowledged. For many, the experience led to an increase in self-confidence, allowing them to step outside their comfort zones and engage with new ideas, people, and environments. Several learners reported that mobility had helped them uncover hidden talents, refine their career aspirations, and develop skills that extended beyond the classroom. These benefits were particularly evident among participants who had limited exposure to international travel or structured learning opportunities.

Beyond personal growth, mobility had a profound effect on social inclusion. Many learners, particularly those who had previously felt isolated, found that international experiences encouraged them to engage more actively in their communities. Older learners, for instance, described mobility as an opportunity to forge new friendships, exchange ideas, and overcome the fear of international engagement. The experience of navigating new cultures and interacting with diverse groups contributed to a greater sense of independence, which many participants carried forward into other aspects of their lives.

While the immediate impact of mobility was clear, several organisations also noted its long-term benefits. Some participants, years after their initial mobility experience, had gone on to further education, new careers, or advocacy roles within their communities. In this way, mobility served as a catalyst for lifelong learning and ongoing personal development.

However, the interviews also revealed that mobility was not always a universally positive experience. In some cases, learners faced significant challenges that hindered their ability to fully engage with the program. In France, organisations noted that certain participants came from challenging backgrounds with unstable housing, past involvement in crime, or mental health struggles and that mobility alone could not address their needs. For these individuals, mobility was sometimes counterproductive, highlighting the importance of targeted support before, during, and after the mobility experience.

3.3.3 Readiness, Challenges, and Barriers to Inclusion

Despite the many advantages of mobility programs, significant barriers continue to limit full participation, particularly for disadvantaged learners. Financial constraints were one of the most frequently cited challenges across all partner countries. Many learners lacked the financial means to cover expenses related to travel, accommodation, and personal support. While Erasmus+ funding alleviated some of these costs, it was often insufficient to address the needs of participants requiring additional assistance, such as those with disabilities.

Language barriers also emerged as a recurring issue, particularly in Lithuania, where many senior learners struggled with English proficiency. This limitation often restricted their ability to fully engage with international peers and take advantage of learning opportunities. Some organisations attempted to address this by providing accompanying staff, but the lack of systematic funding for such support meant that only a limited number of learners could participate.



Logistical challenges were another common concern, particularly in securing suitable accommodations and travel arrangements for learners with disabilities. In Germany, organisations reported that the increasing digitalisation of the tourism sector, including automated check-ins and self-service systems, posed additional difficulties for disadvantaged learners who required human support.

A further barrier was the lack of comprehensive training for staff involved in mobility coordination. Several organisations acknowledged that their personnel needed additional preparation in areas such as disability inclusion, intercultural communication, and psychological support. Without this training, ensuring an inclusive experience for all learners remained a significant challenge.

3.3.4 Needs and Competence Development

To address these challenges, several key areas of development must be prioritised. Increased financial support is essential, particularly in covering the costs of accompanying staff and personal assistance for learners with disabilities. Additionally, there is a need for structured training programs for educators and mobility coordinators, equipping them with the skills to support diverse learners effectively.

Developing more flexible mobility models could also enhance accessibility. By offering hybrid learning opportunities, shorter mobility durations, or localised mobility options, more learners could be included. Strengthening partnerships between sending and hosting organisations would further ensure that mobility experiences are well-coordinated and inclusive.

3.3.5 Best Practices and Recommendations

Several organisations have already implemented successful strategies to enhance inclusion. In France, structured pre-departure preparation has been effective in reducing anxiety among learners and ensuring they are well-equipped for mobility. In Lithuania, the provision of accompanying staff has significantly improved the experience for senior participants. Germany has developed detailed checklists to assess whether learners are ready for mobility, ensuring that those who participate receive the appropriate level of support.

Looking ahead, there is a pressing need to expand financial aid, develop more inclusive infrastructure, and enhance training for both teaching and administrative staff. One of the major challenges identified was the significant administrative burden associated with supporting disadvantaged learners while also meeting the extensive reporting requirements of the Erasmus+ program. To alleviate these challenges, investing in AI-driven administrative support tools could streamline processes, reduce paperwork, and help organisations better manage the additional needs of disadvantaged learners. Integrating AI-assisted translation and accessibility tools could also lower participation barriers, making it easier for sending organisations to facilitate inclusive mobility experiences.

Furthermore, greater awareness campaigns are essential in encouraging participation among disadvantaged groups who may not be aware of these opportunities or who perceive mobility as inaccessible. By implementing these strategies, mobility programs can become more inclusive and effective, ensuring that learners from all backgrounds have the opportunity to engage in international experiences and benefit from the personal and professional growth they offer.

4 Conclusion

The TRAIL project seeks to address one of the most pressing gaps in the Erasmus+ KA1 framework: the persistent underrepresentation of disadvantaged adult learners in mobility opportunities. Despite the inclusion priority in the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ program, data from both EU and national levels show a limited reach to this group. A thorough needs analysis, conducted via surveys, interviews, and desk research, revealed both structural and attitudinal barriers that hinder inclusive mobility, alongside key areas where intervention is urgently required.

4.1 Gaps in Participation and Visibility

Current statistics demonstrate a systemic imbalance in KA1 adult education mobility. While some countries report high inclusion rates, such as Italy, these figures often represent only small absolute numbers. In most contexts, mobility opportunities are largely dominated by staff exchanges, leaving learners—particularly those with fewer opportunities—underrepresented. This lack of visibility stems from several issues:

- Sparse and inconsistent data collection on disadvantaged learners in adult education;
- Absence of targeted communication about inclusive mobility offers;
- Limited availability of host organisations equipped for diverse learner needs.

4.2 Organisational Barriers and Staff Readiness

Findings from the TRAIL survey and interviews show that while motivation to support disadvantaged learners is high (average motivation score: 4.4/5), readiness remains moderate (average readiness score: 3.6/5). Key organisational barriers include:

- Insufficient staff capacity and lack of trained personnel to accompany and support learners with complex needs;
- Limited support services, including mentoring, mental health services, or adapted pedagogical strategies;
- Administrative complexity and bureaucracy, especially in applying for additional support grants.

4.3 Learner-Specific Needs

Disadvantaged adult learners face a range of personal, social, and structural challenges that must be addressed to ensure equitable participation in mobility opportunities. These challenges intersect and compound, creating significant obstacles that cannot be resolved through financial support alone. A nuanced understanding of these barriers is essential to designing mobility programs that are genuinely inclusive and empowering. These include:

- Financial instability, making mobility-related costs (even when funded) a significant obstacle;
- Low confidence and readiness, particularly among older adults or those with limited formal education;
- Communication and language barriers, especially among migrants, NEETs, or those with disabilities;
- Fear of unfamiliar environments, exacerbated by past trauma, mental health conditions, or lack of support networks.

4.4 Need for Structural and Systemic Change

In addition to addressing individual and organisational barriers, achieving truly inclusive mobility requires changes at the systemic level. These broader shifts involve improving



coordination across stakeholders, embedding inclusivity into mobility systems and platforms, and recognising diverse forms of learning and engagement. Without these foundational changes, efforts at the organisational or learner level may have limited impact.

The TRAIL research also identified broader systemic needs:

- Stronger partnerships between mobility providers and local support organisations to build integrated support networks around each learner;
- Greater use of flexible mobility formats, such as short-term, blended, or localised exchanges;
- Centralised platforms to facilitate matchmaking between sending and hosting institutions, share inclusive practice, and provide guidance on accessible mobility planning;
- Recognition systems (e.g. LEVEL5) that acknowledge informal and non-formal learning achievements in inclusive contexts.

4.5 Priorities for TRAIL

To address the complex barriers identified across all levels of the mobility process, TRAIL has outlined a set of strategic priorities. These priorities reflect the gaps observed in the collected data and aim to strengthen the capacity of organisations and systems to better support inclusive mobility. The approach draws on findings from surveys, interviews, and desk research that point to the need for better training, more adaptable learning formats, accessible resources, and sustainable infrastructures for long-term impact.

4.5.1 Development of a Competence Framework

One key priority is the development of a structured competence framework for staff involved in adult education mobility. Data indicates that while many staff are motivated to support disadvantaged learners, they often lack formal training or tools to do so effectively. A clearly defined framework can assist organisations in identifying and developing critical competences—such as accessibility planning, inclusive facilitation, and mental health sensitivity—that support participation among learners with fewer opportunities.

4.5.2 Implementation of Flexible Learning Formats

Another identified need is the implementation of diverse and flexible learning formats. Research participants highlighted that rigid or intensive mobility models are unsuitable for many adult learners facing financial, psychological, or logistical barriers. Offering modular, short-term, or blended learning opportunities can enable gradual engagement and increase accessibility. Such formats also allow organisations to adapt mobility offers to the readiness level of individual participants.

4.5.3 Establishment of the TRAIL Support Hub

Additionally, the creation of a digital TRAIL Support Hub responds to recurring calls for centralised, accessible resources and improved collaboration. Stakeholders reported challenges in navigating administrative procedures, locating inclusive host partners, and exchanging good practices. A digital platform that consolidates tools, training modules, and matchmaking functions can significantly support both sending and hosting institutions.

4.5.4 Promoting Sustainable Collaboration and Peer Learning

Lastly, ensuring the long-term sustainability of inclusive mobility requires more than technical solutions. TRAIL addresses the structural risk of fragmentation and dependency on individual champions by fostering institutional ownership and inter-organisational collaboration. Peer learning, network-building, and communities of practice are essential for maintaining and scaling inclusive mobility beyond the life of the project.



TRANSITION TO ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING



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